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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the progress made by the Commission on Higher Education and the faculty and administrators at New Mexico's 25 postsecondary campuses in facilitating student transfer between institutions. New Mexico's colleges and universities have steadily improved their working relationships, which is based on an increased rate of transfer credits. The state's six public universities have been found to accept 94% of the credits presented for transfer. Reasons for transferring and being denied transfer are described. An analysis was performed on data from the Commission's statewide database to gather information about the representation of transfer students among bachelor's degree recipients. The study found that nearly half of New Mexico's bachelor's degrees are awarded to transfer students. In addition, most baccalaureate students enroll for more than the minimum number of credits needed for the completion of a degree. Statewide, transfer students differ little, if at all, from native students in this respect. Commission Priorities for 1998-1999 are also detailed, including the defining of the competencies expected of students when they complete the statewide common core of general education. A table describes credit hour accumulation by transfer and native students in New Mexico, by university. (JJL)

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Student Transfer

Between New Mexico's Postsecondary Institutions

New Mexico Commission on Higher Education
Spring 1998

During 1997 the Commission on Higher Education and faculty and administrators at the state's 25 postsecondary campuses continued to work together to smooth the pathway for students transferring from one campus to another. This is a brief report of that progress and a summary of the materials developed to assist students in preparing for transfer.

Nationwide research reveals that the majority of students enrolling for higher education now assemble coursework from two or three campuses by the time they complete their degree programs. Some students enroll for the equivalent of a year or two at one institution and then transfer to a second and sometimes even a third before completing a degree. In New Mexico, for example, half of the students receiving bachelor's degrees in 1995-96 had transferred from another institution-- either in-state or out-of-state-- before completing their degree. Other students enroll from the outset at the institution where they intend to complete a degree, but also take selected courses elsewhere with the intention of transferring those courses toward their degree. In addition, students often interrupt their enrollment to work or take care of other obligations or they alter their aspirations and shift campuses to pursue new degree plans. Given the complex patterns of student enrollment that are now seen in New Mexico and other states, it is vital that students, faculty, and administrators all continue to play their parts in assuring appropriate transfer of credit between campuses and contribution of those credits toward degree requirements.

- Transfer in New Mexico:Institutions Operating as a System
- Transfer Students Among Bachelor's Degree Recipients
- Commission Priorities for 1998-1999
- Sound Advisement of Students and Careful Selection of Courses Are Critical

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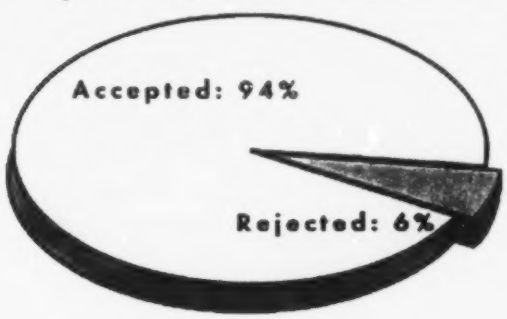
Commission on Higher Education

Transfer of Students among NM's Postsecondary Institutions

Transfer in New Mexico: Institutions Operating as a System

Since the late 1980s, New Mexico's colleges and universities have steadily improved their working relationships, which is reflected in an increased rate of acceptance of transfer credits. In 1989-90, for example, fewer than 70% of the credits presented for evaluation were accepted in transfer. In recent years, the acceptance rate has reached 85%, statewide. The state's six public universities now accept 94% of the credits presented for transfer.

Acceptance of Transfer Credits
by New Mexico Public Universities



Of the 6% of credits denied transfer:

45% were from vocational or other courses unrelated to the transfer program

33% were from developmental or remedial courses, not at a college level

18% were from courses that had been repeated to raise a grade

3% were from courses in which the student had earned a grade of D or less

Some students now transfer between community colleges or from a university to a community college. In some cases, these students have changed their educational goals and have decided to seek a vocational certificate or associate's degree. Others are taking courses preparatory for yet another transfer elsewhere. New Mexico's nineteen two-year campuses as a group accepted 76% of the credits presented for evaluation. Many of these credits could not be accepted because they were earned in academic courses, including some junior- and senior-level courses, unrelated to the students' new goals.

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Transfer of Students among NM's Postsecondary Institutions

Transfer Students Among Bachelor's Degree Recipients:

Prevalence and Accumulation of Credits in Comparison to Non-Transfer Students

For the first time this year, an analysis was performed on data from the Commission's statewide data base to gather information about the representation of transfer students among bachelor's degree recipients. The general strategy was to classify each graduate in a given group of degree recipients as either a transfer student at some point in his/her education or as a non-transfer (often denoted as a "native" student, that is, one whose postsecondary education was begun at the institution where the degree was granted.) and then to count the number of credit hours accumulated by each student at the time of completing the degree.

> For the first step, classifying students as transfers or non-transfers, the method followed was to identify (using the CHE's Degree File) all students, statewide, receiving a bachelor's degree from a New Mexico university during academic year 1995-96. The CHE's Student File, which describes each student enrolled during a given academic term, was then searched for all terms back to Fall 1983 (the earliest term in the system) to identify the earliest point at which each student was designated as a first-time-freshman and/or as a transfer student at one of New Mexico's public campuses.[1] For the second step, counting credit hours, each student's credit hours in every term for which he/she was enrolled were cumulated between the earliest date in the system though graduation.[2] Two key observations result from this analysis.

Nearly half of New Mexico's bachelor's degrees are awarded to transfer students. In 1995-96, 5,660 students received bachelor's degrees from New Mexico's six universities. Of this number, 4,407 could be classified clearly as either transfers or non-transfers. Of these students, 47% (2,092) had transferred into the university where they ultimately received their degree. Of the transfers, slightly fewer than half (981) had transferred from another New Mexico institution and slightly more than half (1,111) had transferred from out of state. This analysis confirms that student transfer is now a major phenomenon in higher education and that New Mexico institutions receive a substantial number of transfer students from other states.

Most students accumulate more than the minimum number of credit hours needed for completion of a degree. Statewide, transfer students differ little if at all from native students in this respect. A minimum of 128 credit hours is required for award of a bachelor's degree at most of New Mexico's universities (New Mexico Tech requires a minimum of 130). Among those students who completed their degree at the institution they had originally entered ("native students"), the average number of credits accumulated at the time of graduation was 140. Among transfers from other New Mexico institutions, the average number of credits accumulated was 141. For the six

universities, individually, the averages for credit accumulation are shown in the left half of the following table.

University	Credit Hours Accumulated by Native Students	Credit Hours Accumulated by Transfer Students	Percent of Students Exceeding 135 Credit Hours at Graduation: Native Students	Percent of Students Exceeding 135 Credit Hours at Graduation: Transfer Students
UNM	144	136	55%	50%
NMSU	136	148	43%	65%
NMTech	136	144	39%	50%
ENMU	138	134	47%	48%
NMHU	148	138	67%	55%
WNMU	139	146	48%	69%
Unweighted Averages:	**140**	**141**	**50%**	**56%**

Using 135 credit hours as a cut-off for identifying students who had accumulated "excess" credits prior to graduation, about 50% of the native students, statewide, exceeded this level in comparison to 56% of the in-state transfer students, shown in the right half of the above table. This excess credit amounts to three or four additional courses taken by a typical student, whether he/she has transferred from another New Mexico institution or has completed the bachelor's degree at the institution of original enrollment. Recall, however, that some programs require more than the institution's minimum credit requirement for graduation. Thus, for many students, these three or four "excess" courses may actually be required for their degree.

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[1]This process is limited somewhat by the facts that some campuses were not part of the CHE's data base until later in the 1980s, data for selected terms at selected campuses are missing for other reasons, and a very small number of 1995-96 graduates may have entered or transferred prior to 1983. Of the 5,660 graduates of 1995-96, 1,330 (24%) could not be classified as transfers or non-transfers. Because this part of the analysis is based upon the Student File, those students who originally enroll at the institution where they complete their degree continue to be classified as native students, even if they have taken some coursework elsewhere as part of their studies.

[2]For students who had transferred into a New Mexico university from an out-of-state institution, this total does not include any credits earned out of state, because those credits are not included in the CHE's data base. Therefore, the credit analysis cannot be applied meaningfully to transfers from out of state.

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Transfer of Students among NM's Postsecondary Institutions

Commission Priorities for 1998-1999

During the coming academic year, the Commission will continue its work with institution faculty and administrators to develop additional two-year transfer modules in particular areas of study. Another priority of the Commission is to define the competencies expected of students when they complete the statewide common core of general education. The Commission also is undertaking a statewide institutional accountability initiative, which is likely to include assessment of student competencies.

> Students seeking admission to bachelor's degree programs after beginning their study at a community college or another university no longer need be frustrated by earlier provincial thinking about the content of programs or the qualifications of faculty. Students do have to select their courses wisely and perform well in order to assure their success after transfer.

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Transfer of Students among NM's Postsecondary Institutions

Sound Advisement of Students and Careful Selection of Courses are Critical!

From the perspective of current and future students, several guides are now available to help them choose courses that will be appropriate for their educational goals and that will be guaranteed to transfer between campuses. New Mexico's postsecondary institutions have made great progress over the past decade in acceptance of credits. The critical factors in achieving smooth transfer between institutions are now (1) a student's judicious selection of courses early in his or her enrollment and (2) the availability of good advice from campus personnel that will assist the student in making wise choices. A number of advisory materials are available to assist students in making sound choices as they enroll for courses.

- **New Mexico's Common Core of Lower-Division General Education**
  This list of 35-credit-hours of general education courses is the safest choice for students who have not yet selected a major field of study for their degree. The common core is the base around which most degree programs are built and the courses in the core are guaranteed to transfer between all New Mexico campuses and to apply toward the graduation requirements for most degree programs. The common core is published in most institutions' catalogs and can also be obtained from campus advisors or from the Commission on Higher Education.

- **Transfer Modules for Students Who Have Identified an Academic Major**
  Lists of recommended courses equivalent to two years' of study have been prepared for students who have selected a major but may not have selected the university where they wish to complete that major. These lists --called transfer modules-- are available for students majoring in engineering, business, and teacher education and are under development for majors in physical science, life science, behavioral/social science, humanities/fine arts, nursing, and early childhood education. Students who follow the course recommendations in these modules will benefit from a sound program of study and will be able to move between campuses without loss of credit. Copies of current transfer modules can be obtained from campus advisors or from the Commission on Higher Education.M

- **Transfer Agreements for Students Who Have Identified a Next Institution**
  Students who decide early upon both a major and a transfer university may be able to follow specific, four-year plans of study agreed upon between a

particular community college and a particular university. Information about these agreements can be obtained from campus advisors.

New Mexico's public community colleges and universities have demonstrated their interest in assisting students wishing to move from one campus to another in order to achieve their educational goals. Comparison of credits accumulated by transfer students and non-transfer students at the time they complete a bachelor's degree suggests that transfer credit is being appropriately recognized, at least for most students. The state's postsecondary institutions also have demonstrated their willingness to continue the project of developing advisory tools designed to help students to achieve meaningful higher education in efficient ways across New Mexico. CHEbs artic:annrpt-.98 4/30/98